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THE LITTLE OFFICE

OF THE

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

OF THE

EVER GLORIOUS VIRGIN MARY,

In Prose.

"Corrected by the Master of the Sacred Palace, and approved of by our Holy Father Pope Innocent XI. in the year 1678."

SELECTED FROM A VERY RARE WORK IN FRENCH,

AND TRANSLATED

BY JOHN HANBURY,

Formerly of the College of Carlow.

With an Epistle Dedicatory to the Most Sacred Virgin; a Preface; Notes and Extracts from the Fathers, and illustrious men in all ages, down to the great Dr. Doyle, of Kildare and Leighlin.

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

"Qui petit sine Ipsa Duce, sine alis tentat volare."

"All the virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit are given through her, as she wishes, as much as she wishes, and when she wishes."

DUBLIN:

JAMES DUFFY, 10, WELLINGTON QUAY.

1848.

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TO THE

MOST SACRED VIRGIN MARY

OF MOUNT CARMEL,

MOTHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

MOST GLORIOUS QUEEN,

You have been proclaimed by a beautiful modern writer, "Eldest Daughter of the Church, Queen of heaven and earth, and the first of all the Saints, who shine resplendent like a brilliant lamp above all the choirs of the heavenly Jerusalem."

All the Holy Fathers down from the days of the Apostles, have exhausted the beauties of language in pronouncing your eulogies, and invoking the power of your glorious protection.

Your illustrious servant, Saint Bernard, recognizes you as the "great sign in the heavens" spoken of by Saint John in the Apocalypse,—the "woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of

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twelve stars." His exalted ideas of your wonderful dignity have not made him insensible of your prerogative as the Queen of Mercy, for he declares, in unison with the common consent of the saint and the sinner in every clime, that it was "unheard of in any age that those who invoked your powerful protection were ever abandoned by you."

The Bishop of St. Agatha, Liguori, another name for learning and sanctity, vies with Saint Bernard in the sublimity of his invocations and praises.

To his devotion to you from infancy, Most Sacred Virgin, may, under God, be attributed his "never having committed a deliberate venial sin," and his ultimate canonization by the Church in these our days. His writings everywhere abound in the most tender expressions of love and piety; whenever he appeared in the pulpit, his auditory was most numerous, and he has been frequently seen "raised in ecstacy from the earth" when preaching on your glorious prerogatives.

How many millions of Saints, unknown and unheard of by the great body of mankind, owe their crowns of immortal glory to your advocacy and intercession!

To introduce the names of many lay individuals,

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illustrious by station, talents, learning and genius, who have under our own observation been devoted to you, Most Sacred Virgin, through long and eventful lives, and in death—some of whom honoured by their fellow-creatures, not only in their own country, but in the remotest regions of the earth—I do not feel myself warranted; because the names and titles of others than *canonized* saints of the Church were in my mind unsuited to the pages of any work, however humble, dedicated to the propagation of your praise. If there be error in this notion, you will vouchsafe, Most Holy Virgin, to attribute it to the weakness of human judgment—and I may add, I hope, to the profound reverence which, in common with all Christians, I feel for dignity exalted so far above my feeble comprehension, dignity on which I should not presume to speak, if the Church did not declare that you promise "eternal life to all those who shall have *endeavoured* to make you honoured."*

From the earliest ages members of the faithful from every part of the world have visited the Shrine of the Apostles, in the Eternal City—yet none have ever gone on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the "*Queen* of the Apostles"—what a

* Bref. Liv. Ros. 1832, et passim.

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mark of coldness, neglect and indignity to the "*Supplex Omnipotens!*" But your immaculate person, O great Queen fell, forsooth, to the lot of frail humanity!—you who were conceived without stain—born without spot or blemish—who never even venially offended your Lord. You who bore the Saviour of mankind, nursed, caressed and adored Him—watched over the infancy of this God Incarnate—were a witness of his glorious miracles, a few only of which are recorded in the Gospel. You who saw him suffer, in his Adorable body, all those cruel tortures which pierced your virginal maternal heart. You who beheld him glorious and immortal, and conversed with him for forty days after his resurrection from the dead. You who in fine, died of pure love of the holy and undivided Trinity. Yet notwithstanding all this, *your* body permitted, indeed! to be consigned to, and moulder within the precincts of a loathsome tomb in common with —even the greatest saints—the most abandoned sinners! Ah! no gracious Lady! nor Enoch, nor Elias has seen *your* tomb; for your throne is your tomb, "in a pillar of the clouds," in the presence of unspeakable majesty!

What tongue can "hymn your praise." If the golden pen of a Chrisostom or the splendid eulogiums of a Cyril of Alexandria, among the

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early saints and fathers, or the almost superhuman eloquence of the "divine Bossuet" or that of a Fenelon, of Cambray, or a Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin, among the modern "luminaries" in the brilliant chandelier of the church have, confessedly, fallen short of doing justice to your incomparable dignity, nothingness should be silent if gratitude were not too strong to be stifled in the mere "mute eloquence" of the heart—*Hinc illæ eheu indignæ voces!*

The more we reflect on that incomprehensible dignity, gracious Lady, the more we *must* feel sensible of our own.

A great architect of modern times, after having visited the Church of St. Peter, at Rome, and after having viewed the grandeur of that wonderful edifice, dedicated to the glory of Almighty God, fell prostrate in adoration, and afterwards declared, in effect, that he felt dignified in being a fellow-creature of the man who had conceived the idea of a temple so magnificent.

If a mind evidently so gifted have given expression to a sentiment so sublime, and withal, perhaps, so suitable, may not I, a comparatively humble person, declare myself infinitely more dignified in being not only a fellow-creature, but

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a servant of such a Lady—a client of such an Advocate—a subject of such a Queen—and, oh! highest of all these privileges, a child of such a Mother as the "Tower of Ivory," which contained the "TEMPLE"* of all temples?

Surely I may, but with sentiments of profound humility and thanks to God, as well for the honour as for a sense of the distinction and the happiness of the privilege.

Deign, most gracious Lady, to permit the writer of these lines to dedicate to you the following prose translation of the "LITTLE OFFICE" of your "IMMACULATE CONCEPTION," originally approved of by your Son's Vicar, Pope Innocent XI.

From one so lowly a miracle of humility, will not, I hope, contemn a tribute so inadequate—(as a mere translation)—to the dignity of so "GLORIOUS A PANEGYRIC ON GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE."

From one so unworthy, mercy so renowned through ages will not despise an offering, certainly less suited to your sanctity as passing through his hands.

Such an offering, however, from one, without arrogance, so deeply indebted, will, it is hoped,

* John, ii. 19–21.

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be acceptable, because accompanied by those feeble expressions of the dictates of a heart which you know loves you next after God.

That the perusal of this little book may tend to excite in others more ardent devotion to the mother of Jesus Christ, is nearly all that I can desire in life and in death, next after the love and adoration of the Holy Trinity, to accomplish whose mercy to mankind you have been chosen as the glorious "handmaid"—the great "Oriental gate" through which the Redeemer "has come into the world" to lead "captivity captive," and "crush" for ever "the head of the serpent," the infernal enemy, who would dissuade fallen man from having recourse to the protection of the only Advocate who never solicits the mercy of your adorable Son in vain.

As often as this little book falls into the hands of my fellow-creature—as often as that fellow-creature invokes through you the mercy of your Son, imploring the mercy of the Father—so often do I implore of you, O gracious Mother and Advocate, to lift up your pure hands for mercy to me, whether I be on my pilgrimage here below, or suffering in the fire of purgation in another world, before I can behold and adore

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unspeakable Majesty, and next after kiss the feet of the Queen of heaven and earth.

I remain, most gracious Lady, in life and death the last and most unworthy, though, I hope, not the least devoted, of

Your children and servants,

JOHN HANBURY.

DUBLIN, 24TH JUNE, 1848,
FEAST OF MY PATRON, ST. JOHN
THE BAPTIST.

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TO THE READER.

THE Translator, in order to make this little work as perfect as possible, will prefix a few words explanatory of the proper names (of men and women) used in the Office. Among the Hebrews and Greeks such names are very expressive; and though the holy author of the Office may never have contemplated derivation, yet those names, in their original signification, are strongly expressive of the glory of the Most Sacred Virgin. The language of the Office is figurative; the Notes at the end will fully explain it. These few hasty lines will be useful as a supplement, and they are, with the notes, intended solely for the less informed reader.

All are aware that the adorable name JESUS is a Hebrew word, signifying *Saviour*. Christ is a Greek word signifying "*the anointed*," because our Lord was a *priest*—"a priest eternally, according to the order of Melchisedech"—a compound word, expressing the title and one of the attributes of our Saviour, namely "*King of Justice*."

Many Christian names familiar among ourselves are Hebrew; for example, Michael signifies "*who is like to God;*" Daniel signifies "*Judgment of God;*" John "*Grace of the Lord;*" James "*supplanter or underminer*," &c. &c.

The Greeks followed the example of the Hebrews in this respect. Stephen signifies "a *crown;*" Philip "*warlike*" (or a lover of horses rather); Nicholas "*conqueror of the people*," &c. &c.

The first name in the Office is MARY. This name is by some interpreted "*exalted;*" but the meaning is "*Star of the Sea.*" There is such a body of history connected with this name, that it were idle to dwell on it in this little work; hereafter the Translator may have an addltional honor and happiness in entering

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the subject; he will therefore briefly confine himself to the other names, as follow:—

JACOB, p. 22, means "*underminer*," and is nearly the same as James. How suitable to a work in honor of our Blessed Lady, the great secondary underminer of the powers of darkness."

SOLOMON, p. 23, is interpreted "*peaceable or perfect.*" Perhaps there never was a perfect creature but the Blessed Virgin; all mankind were born "children of wrath"—original or actual stain was never found in the Holy Virgin.

AARON signifies "*mount of strength.*" Mary was and is the "mysterious rod' of the "mount of strength" a great agent in the hands of Omnipotence.

GIDEON signifies "*cutting off iniquity.*" Of how many millions has not the advocacy of Mary "blotted out the iniquities!"

EVE signifies "*living.*" Her name is a kind of contradiction to her act of *death*, which she brought on mankind by her curiosity and disobedience. Mary is "the mother of the living"—the mother of the Son of the Living God.

DAVID signifies "*well beloved;*" JUDITH "*rejoicing;*" and ABIGAL "*joy of the Father.*"

The other names are not important to our purpose.

The names ANNE and JOACHIM, however, p. 39, deserve particular notice and veneration, as those of the parents of our gracious Lady. Anne signifies "*merciful;*" Mary was mercy by nature—Grace made her its Queen. Joachim signifies "*the Lord shall arise.*" From him has arisen Mary, "*the Star of the Sea*"—from this star has arisen Jesus Christ, "the Bright and Morning Star."

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PREFACE.

THE Translator does not presume to offer any eulogium on the following little work—the approval of the Vicar of Christ, as set forth on the title-page, is a eulogy higher than any other on earth—his only anxiety has been to give the spirit of the original; and this he has done to the best of his ability. If it be true that "every thing suffers by translation," it is particularly so in a composition like this, in which one must confine himself strictly to the precise words before him, because too sacred to allow that freedom permitted in profane works.

There are many editions of the office of the Immaculate Conception, in poetry: for the memory of the pious and learned authors the translator entertains the highest respect; but he humbly conceives, that to the capacities of ordinary readers many of them are not well suited, because too abstruse, and, in some particulars, little short of being unintelligible, in consequence of a desire

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to sacrifice common sense to very indifferent verse. The task, however, of translating figurative languages from prose into poetry is a most difficult one—a "poet born" is often lost in any attempt to do so. There are notes appended: the translator begs they will be read before reading the office.

As an introduction to the office, if any be required, it is only necessary to name St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal, Priest, and Archbishop of Milan, who daily read it on his knees. His devotion to our Most Holy Mother was so ardent, that he frequently prostrated himself in the streets, at the sound of the bell for the "Angelus," as well to honour the great Mystery of the Incarnation, as to pay this public mark of respect to the Mother of Jesus Christ. He also daily recited the rosary, and invariably fasted on bread and water on the vigils of her festivals.

This public honour *in the streets* is not uncommon on the continent, nor need we wonder at it when we reflect that it was foretold by the Prophet nearly three thousand years before the days of St. Charles Borromeo, and little short of one thousand before the birth of our gracious Lady. In proof of this I quote the following from the Book of Ecclesiasticus in the Douay Bible.

"I am exalted as a cedar in Libanus, and as a

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cypress in Mount Sion, as a palm tree in Cades am I exalted, and as a rose plant in Jericho; as a fair olive tree in the fields, and as a plane tree by the water *in the streets* am I exalted."

As this edition is intended for all classes, the poor particularly, it should be observed that no person is *obliged* to read the office kneeling. The Very Rev. Doctor Spratt says, that "it may be read standing, walking, or sitting, but a kneeling posture is preferable."

Saturday being a day specially devoted to the Mother of God, it is suggestsd to those not yet members of her sacred order, to recite it on that day. The happiest consequences may follow their doing so.

There is an indulgence of one hundred days, for reciting this office; one hundred days for reciting the anthem and prayer, p. 29; one hundred days for the "*Stabat Mater;*" and three hundred for the Litany of our Blessed Lady—in all six hundred days; but the first mentioned one hundred days are granted only to those who wear the holy scapular.

Many of the Popes have been members and the most enthusiastic supporters of the order; thousands of patriarchs, prelates, priests, and religious of every denomination; thousands of statesmen, heroes, and others; even the highest

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of the nobility, before what is called the Reformation, felt a holy pride in wearing the livery, or the scapular, of our lady of Mount Carmel; and the number of persons eminent for holiness in every age of the Church, who have fought under this "sign of salvation" is incalculable, and will be known only at the day of judgment. Stupendous miracles have been wrought through the agency of the holy scapular. This will not surprise any but those who doubt that "the mantle of Elias divided twice the waters of the Jordan, (4 Kings, ii.); that the shadow of St. Peter cured all diseases, (Acts v.); that the handkerchiefs and napkins of St. Paul drove away all evil spirits, and healed all sorts of infirmities, (Acts, xix. 12)."—*Treatise on the Scapular. Dub.* 1838.

This, to be sure, is "not the age of miracles;" but there are daily and hourly miracles of the grace of God—of splendid triumphs over the dreadful powers we have to contend against; for we have to wage war on this earth to the last moment of our existence, not with one individual enemy, but with legions—principalities; and let it be recollected that Mary is declared by the Vicar of Jesus Christ to be "*formidable a tout l'enfer*," "dreadful to the whole power of hell." We contend for a crown of glory—each indi-

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holy scapular. The confessor of every person will pronounce him worthy; his decision will be that of the Church. *There is no fast required;* and as to opportunity, the reverend gentlemen of any Carmelite Church in Ireland will admit the faithful. There are two churches in Dublin—one at Whitefriars Street, another at Clarendon Street; one at Kildare, &c. &c.; and the Very Rev. Nicholas O'Connor, P.P. of Maryborough, in the Queen's County, has received a power seldom possessed by the secular clergy, to enrol persons in this sacred order.

The Translator had intended to enter very fully into proofs of the veneration paid by illustrious men of all ages to the Mother of God. On reflection, such an undertaking would require a large volume rather than a preface, while it were a work of supererogation, because all will admit what none presume to deny. The translator will, therefore, confine himself to little other matter than a few extracts from some of the most holy doctors of the Church, who fully echo the sentiments of all the others.

From the fall of our first parents, the Blessed Virgin, next after her adorable Son, was ardently expected. Woman made man a slave of the devil; but the glorious privilege of crushing the infernal enemy for ever was reserved for woman,

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after God, in the person of Mary, the great "Oriental gate through which the Saviour was to enter the world." After a lapse of about four thousand years, she appeared. Of her was born the second person of the most holy Trinity, equal to his Father in majesty and glory. She was a poor humble individual; she possessed none of the baubles of the world, and therefore she was little honoured, and almost unknown. If into her virginal heart accursed pride could have entered —she was far higher than the great majority of her neighbours, the lineal descendant as she was of the greatest monarch, and the most sublime penetential writer that the world has produced, KING DAVID, "a man after God's own heart"—but no! she was humble, and her humility has exalted her above all created beings, and that humility places her this day "above all angelic choirs," and encircles her sacred brow with a diadem of "glory, which will increase daily till the day of judgment, and will last for ages of ages," as long as God is God.

We learn from St. Ambrose (*Epist. ad Varcel, cap.* 14), that St. Elizabeth, cousin of the Blessed Virgin, fearing the tyranny of Herod, fled with her son, St. John the Baptist, into the desert, where he embraced the institute or order of the Blessed Virgin, in consequence of the devotion

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vidual, like a soldier who is separated from the main body of the army is weak *per se*—united to the legions he becomes invincible. Just so with every member of the order of the Blessed Virgin—united to the great body of his brethren in every part of the world, he becomes triumphant. "Where two or three are assembled in my name there I am in the midst of them," says our Lord; and if the promise be made to "two or three" will it be broken to millions? Surely not. But to pursue this subject is unnecessary.

On the advantages held out by the Church to members of this Order, the Very Rev. Dr. Spratt, one of the superiors for Ireland, is the best authority. From a learned and pious work of the reverend gentleman, entitled "The Carmelite Manual,"* the following is an extract. After giving a list of the indulgences which are very numerous, the learned Doctor says:—"Besides these indulgences and favours, the brothers and sisters (he means those who are members of the order) participate in all the spiritual benefits which are given not only in the Carmelite Order, but also in the whole Church, wherefore they participate in all the prayers, vigils, alms, masses, fastings, pilgrimages, mortifications, penances; and, in fine, in all those blessings which are prayed

* Published by James Duffy.

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for *throughout the world* in so many cloisters of monks and nuns, in the infinite number of churches, confraternities, oratories, and congregations, which, as it were with one voice and one heart, in a thousand parts of the world, pray through the means of the most holy Virgin to the throne of the Divine Majesty."—*Clement VIII.*

The writer may remark that, while so many of the great ones of the earth take such pains, and make influence to become members of various orders, such as those of the "Bath," of the "Legion of Honour," &c.—in being decorated with the silly ribbons of which they prostrate themselves on the earth before poor weak creatures like themselves, and all for the purpose of displaying those little worthless baubles to the admiring multitude—few of what are called the upper ranks are found to kneel before a priest of the living God, the representative of Jesus Christ on earth, to be invested with the insignia of the order of the greatest Queen that ever adorned human nature, before whom all the monarchs of the earth sink into utter insignificance. Many object, however, to become members—1st, from an idea of their unworthiness; 2nd, inability to fast; 3rd, want of opportunity. Now, the two first objections are suggestions of the infernal enemy, who hates and dreads the

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already felt to Mary in the infant Church. We are told, too, that the members of this order were the first among mankind to erect a temple to her honour, about the year of our Lord 38, upwards of eighteen hundred years ago. Saint Ambrose himself, followed the example; for of four churches built by that great doctor, one was dedicated to the glory of God, under the patronage of our Blessed Lady. Nor can we doubt that the Holy Virgin often repaired to this chapel to worship her Creator—to assist at the great sacrifice of the new law—"to continue and represent" as we do to-day the "sacrifice of Christ on the Cross," of which she had been only a few years before a melancholy and heart-rent spectator on Mount Calvary.

We find that our Lord in his agony recommended his mother to "the beloved disciple," Saint John. "Woman," said he, "behold thy son; son, behold thy mother." "From that time," say the Holy Fathers, "this virgin mother remained with the virgin disciple, to whose care her Son had confided her." "And it is no longer surprising," says St. Ambrose, "that this apostle has spoken so divinely of the great mysteries of religion, since he had near him the AUGUST SANCTUARY—(the Blessed Virgin)—in which the AUTHOR of all mysteries had been con-

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ceived." "But," says an elegant French writer, "it is not alone to St. John that Mary is given as a mother. This disciple represented all Christians at the foot of the cross, and therefore each of us should look upon Mary as a mother. In receiving from her Son the title of Mother of Christians, she possesses that of Mother of God, —a title which is so august and so admirable, that St. Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, did not fear to say, that it surpasses the highest degree of excellence that can be expressed or imagined, after God." (*Hoc solum quod Dei mater est excedit omnem altitudinem quæ post Deum dici vel cogitari potest.)—St. Ansel. de Excel. Virg.*

By the way, speaking of an archbishop of Canterbury, we cannot forget thus briefly to allude to St. Thomas à Becket, who fell a martyr to his love for the Church. Some of the hymns of this holy Doctor in honour of the Blessed Virgin are in many respects so sublime, that no one can doubt that the author was inspired while composing them. They are in Latin; a translation here is out of the question, though to perceive their beauties they must be read in the original. It is stated on the highest authority, that the Blessed Virgin appeared to him in great majesty.

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It will be borne in mind by the pious reader, that the term, "woman," applied by our Lord to his blessed mother, was a mark of the highest respect. A learned commentator on the Greek and Oriental languages says in effect, that among the people of the East, the Jews particularly, it was the greatest mark of honour that a lady could receive; and when we recollect that our Lord, at the request of this "woman," (the Blessed Virgin,) performed his first great miracle at Cana in Galilee, the reader will form his own opinion on the subject, and be the better able, if uninformed, to reply to those poor deluded creatures who sometimes make the Blessed Virgin a subject of criticism, to use the mildest term that can be applied to objects of such infatuation in these our days. But to proceed with our extracts. Saint Bonaventure assures us, in one of his works, that God could have made nothing more perfect than his mother. "God," said he, "could without doubt have created a world much more vast than this we inhabit, or a heaven much more extended than that which is above us; but he could have made nothing greater or more perfect than his mother."

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who flourished upwards of 1400 years ago, thus salutes the Blessed Virgin in his tenth homily:—

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"Hail, O Mary! mother of God, rich treasure of the world, inextinguishable lamp, crown of virginity, sceptre of the true doctrine, temple which cannot fall, THE RESIDENCE OF HIM WHOM NO PLACE CAN CONTAIN, MOTHER and VIRGIN, by whom he is who cometh blessed in the name of the Lord! Hail, Mary, who in your virgin womb contained Him who is immense and incomprehensible! You through whom the whole Blessed Trinity is glorified and adored!—through whom the Blessed Cross is honoured and venerated over the whole world!—through whom heaven exults, the angels and archangels rejoice, *the devils are banished, the tempter is disarmed, the creature that was fallen is restored to heaven, and comes to the knowledge of the truth!*—through whom holy baptism is instituted—through whom is given the oil of exultation—through whom churches are founded over the whole earth—through whom nations are brought to penance! And what need of more words?—through whom the only-begotten Son of God has shone the light to those that sat in darkness, and in the shade of death, &c. WHAT MAN CAN CELEBRATE THE MOST PRAISE-WORTHY MARY ACCORDING TO HER DIGNITY?"—*Lives of the Fathers, &c., by the Right Rev. J. Doyle, D.D., Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin.*

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With these extracts we shall close; however, as to the power of the Blessed Virgin, the translator begs to quote the following short passages:—"Wherefore," Saint Anselm saith, (*Lib. de Excel. Virg.*,) "there is no doubt but the Blessed Virgin Mary, by maternal right, is with Christ President of heaven and earth. St. John Damascene, *Orat.* 2, *de Assump.* says—"It is fitting and convenient that Mary should possess what is her Son's;" and Barbertu assures us that she is able to obtain more than all the angels and saints in heaven, and more than all the Church throughout the whole world. Lastly, this is the doctrine of St. Jerome, explicated by St. Bernard, *Tom. Serm. Art. Cap.* 10; and another great servant of our Lady says, that "all the virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit are given through her, as she wishes, as much as she wishes, and when she wishes."

No language can be stronger than this, and I only regret that I am unable to give the name of the writer. However, the great St. Bernard in his ardent piety uses language fully as strong by assuming that the Eternal Father thus addressed the most sacred Virgin:—

"Because you have not spared your only Son, but have offered Him for my glory and the salvation of mankind, there shall be nothing I shall

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not do for you in recompense. I will give you a numerous posterity of chosen children—I will constitute you Mother of the living. You shall have in custody the treasury of my liberalities—you shall distribute all my graces—you shall direct my justice; in a word, you shall have the command over my heart—my clemency shall be subject to the law of your tongue, it being fitting that I should bestow as many blessings on the earth as you shall think good to desire."

The holy Virgin spent the remainder of her life after the death of Christ, as she had begun it, in the love and service of her Lord. After his resurrection, she saw and conversed with him for forty days, and was a witness of his glorious ascension from Mount Olivet to heaven. Her death was remarkable. It is quite unnecessary here to detail all the particulars of it. She was not suffered, like ordinary mortals, to become dust and ashes. No. On the third day after her death, and "twelve years after the resurrection of her Son," she was carried triumphantly by angels into the presence of her Creator, and, "with great jubilee and exultation of the whole court of heaven, crowned by her Son with the brightest diadem of glory." The Church, to commemorate this miraculous event, celebrates it annually on the 15th of August, called the

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Assumption. How many great examples of piety and sanctity among the laity could be adduced in proof of the power and mercy of our gracious Lady!—the names of such, however exalted, would not suit these pages.

The translator asks the charity of the pious reader, from whom he humbly begs the prayer with which he began, as he concludes, "HAIL, MARY!"

J. H.

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EXPLANATION OF THE CANONICAL HOURS.

THE office is divided into seven hours, according to the prophet, "*Seven times in the day I have praised thee;*" and also to represent the seven principal parts of the seven hours of our Lord's passion. For our Saviour hung three hours *living* on the cross, three hours *dead*, and the seventh hour was spent in *nailing him to* and *taking him down* from the cross.

By the *Matins and Lauds* we commemorate his agony and bleeding in the garden.

By the *Prime*, his scoffs and false accusations.

By the *Third* hour, his clothing with purple and crowning with thorns.

By the *Sixth*, his condemning and nailing to the cross.

By the *Ninth*, his yielding up the ghost and the opening of his side.

By the *Even Song* or *Vespers*, his taking down from the cross.

By the *Complin*, his burial.

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It may be observed, that the *Matins*, according to canonical time, begin at *midnight:* the *Lauds*, are only an appendix to this. The *Prime* begins at 6 o'clock *in the morning;* but this hour is not punctually observed, except in religious houses.

The pious reader, in reciting the office, will give glory to the Holy Trinity seven times daily, through the medium of the Blessed Virgin. The office may be read as far as *Vespers* any hour before 12 o'clock daily; after that hour, the remainder follows. The Rev. Dr. Spratt says, that *Matins and Lauds* may be read after four o'clock *for next day*, as it would be more in the spirit of the Church. He also states that the office may be read all at once. The pious reader has his choice as to any way he pleases.

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F
19

THE LITTLE OFFICE

OF THE

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

OF THE

MOST SACRED VIRGIN MARY.

AT MATINS AND LAUDS.

LET my lips now announce and publish the praises and the infinite prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

V. Sovereign Queen of heaven and earth, hasten to my assistance.

R. And employ your power to defend me from the mighty enemies of my salvation.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, one God, world without end. Amen.

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HYMN.

HAIL, Sovereign Queen of the heavens and of the whole world! Hail, Virgin by excellence, Queen of Virgins, Brilliant Star of the Morning! Hail, Mary, full of grace—Light without mist or cloud, which never extinguishes! Hasten to come to the succour of all those who invoke your assistance! From all eternity, the Lord has chosen you to be the mother of the Word made Flesh—HIS ONLY SON, by whom all things have been made,—the heavens, the earth, the sea; and at the same time to be his spouse, without stain, in whom Adam has not sinned!

V. God has elected and predestined her in a most singular manner.

R. And has made her to dwell in his tabernacle with distinction.

V. Holy Virgin, support before God my most humble prayer.

R. And let my supplication come unto you.

LET US PRAY.

HAIL, Mary, Queen of the Heavens, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Sovereign Lady of the world, who neither reject or forsake those who have recourse to you! Vouchsafe, my dear mother, to look upon me with an eye of pity and compassion. Obtain for me of your beloved Son

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the pardon of all my sins, that I, who now honour with the devout affection of my whole heart YOUR HOLY AND IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, may attain hereafter to eternal happiness, through the Mercy of Him whom you (a virgin) did bring forth, JESUS CHRIST, our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God in perfect Divine Trinity, world without end. Amen.

V. Holy Virgin, support before God my most humble prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto you.

V. Let us bless the Lord.

R. Let us return thanks to God.

V. And may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

AT PRIME.

V. Sovereign Queen of heaven and earth (*as before, page* 19.)

R. And employ your power, &c.

V. Glory be to the Father, &c.

R. As it was in the beginning, &c.

HYMN.

HAIL, wise Virgin, more than all virgins, House specially consecrated to the true God, and which

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the Divine Wisdom has adorned with seven mysterious pillars, and with that sacred table on which is served the bread of angels and the wheat of the elect! You have been preserved by a singular privilege from the contagion which has infected all men, having been sanctified in the womb of your mother before you saw the day. You are the mother of the living, and the gate of heaven. You are that new star of Jacob which announced the coming of the Messiah! Sovereign Queen of Angels, sacred habitation of the Word Incarnate, formidable to the whole power of hell, Protectress more invincible than an army in battle array, be the asylum and the safe port of all Christians! Amen.

V. The Lord has created her, and filled her with the Holy Ghost.

R. And has accomplished in her favour the greatest wonders.

V. Holy Virgin, support before God, &c. (*as before, page* 21.)

R. And let my supplication, &c.

PRAYER.

HOLY MARY, Queen of the heavens, &c. (*as before, page* 20.)

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AT THIRD.

V. Sovereign Queen of heaven, &c. (p. 21.)
R. And extend your power, &c.
V. Glory be to the Father, &c.
R. As it was in the beginning, &c.

HYMN.

HAIL, true Ark of the Covenant, August Throne, of which that of Solomon was but a feeble figure, Brilliant Arch in the firmament,* sure presage of a constant calm, Burning Bush, which burns with a sacred fire, never consuming. Mysterious Rod of Aaron, ever blooming, Fleece of Gideon, upon which alone specially falls the dew of heaven, Sacred Gate, shut to all others but God, Honeycomb, which combines sweetness with strength! It was meet and just that an Almighty Son and Holiness itself should preserve from original sin—(with which Eve had stained the whole human race)—HIS DEAR MOTHER, and that he should not permit that she should be ever spotted with the slightest stain of sin. Amen.

V. My habitation is fixed in the highest heavens.

R. And my throne is on a pillar of the clouds;

* The Rainbow.

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that is to say, beyond the reach of our eyes and our understanding.

V. Holy Virgin, support before God, &c. (p. 21.)
R. And let my supplication, &c.

PRAYER.

HOLY MARY, Queen of the heavens, &c. (*as before, page* 20.)

AT SIXTH.

V. Sovereign Queen of Heaven, &c.
R. And employ your power, &c.
V. Glory be to the Father, &c.
R. As it was in the beginning, &c.

HYMN.

HAIL, at once virgin and mother, (incomparable title,) August Temple of the Adorable Trinity! You are the joy of Angels, the domicile and the unchangeable habitation of purity, the consolation of the afflicted, the delightful garden of felicity, a miracle of patience, and the most perfect model of chastity! You are that land of benediction in which royalty and the sacerdotal race are united. You are all sanctity, having been exempted from original sin. With justice you have been designated the CITY OF THE MOST HIGH, and the MYSTERIOUS ORIENTAL GATE THROUGH WHICH THE REDEEMER HAS ENTERED

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INTO THE WORLD. In you, O Virgin by excellence is found that fulness of grace which is given only in degree (small comparatively,) to the greatest saints.

V. As the lily among the thorns.

R. So is my well-beloved among the daughters of Adam.

V. Holy Virgin, support before God, &c.

R. And let my supplication, &c.

PRAYER.

HOLY MARY, Queen of the heavens, &c. (*as before, page* 20.)

AT NINTH.

V. Sovereign Queen of heaven and earth, &c.

R. And employ your power, &c.

V. Glory be to the Father, &c.

R. As it was in the beginning, &c.

HYMN.

HAIL, Holy Virgin, asylum and refuge of sinners, figured by that mysterious tower of David in which were suspended a hundred shields, and in which were to be found all sorts of arms, ("trophies of his power.") Inflamed with the fire of the Divine love, you have from the very first moment of your conception crushed the head of the infernal serpent.

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O, mighty woman, of whom the invincible Judith and the wise Abigail were but the figure. Rachel has had the honour of giving to her country Joseph, the Saviour of Egypt, and Mary has borne in her chaste womb the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

V. You are all beautiful, my well beloved.

R. And an original stain was never found in you.

V. Holy Virgin, support, &c.

R. And let my supplication, &c.

PRAYER.

HOLY MARY, Queen of the Heavens, &c. (*as before, page* 20.)

AT VESPERS OR EVEN SONG.

V. Sovereign Queen of heaven and earth, &c.

R. And employ your power, &c.

V. Glory be to the Father, &c.

R. As it was in the beginning, &c.

HYMN.

HAIL, Spotless Virgin, in whom the SON OF JUSTICE has vouchsafed to retrograde, as it were, as on the dial of Achaz, when the WORD WAS MADE FLESH; for in order to raise man from the lowest state (of debasement,) and to elevate him to the pinnacle of glory, the SON OF THE MOST

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HIGH has humbled himself below (the dignity of) angels in his Incarnation.

Mary shines with the rays of this Divine Sun, and at the moment of her Conception she glittered like the Aurora (or brilliant morning star,) when it begins to appear (in the firmament)—like a lily among the thorns, Mary crushes the head of the serpent from that first moment of her existence. Beautiful as the moon in its fulness, she becomes a beacon to those who are in danger of wandering (from the right path on the stormy sea of this world's pilgrimage.)

V. I have given birth to a light in the heavens, which can never extinguish.

R. And have enveloped the earth with a cloud, which guards it from the rays of the sun.

V. Holy Virgin, support, &c.

R. And let my supplication, &c.

PRAYER.

HOLY MARY, Queen of the heavens, &c. (*as before, page* 20.)

AT COMPLIN.

V. Appeased by your prayers, O Virgin, may the Lord Jesus Christ convert us!

R. And may he turn away from us his indignation!

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V. Sovereign Queen of heaven and earth, &c.
R. And employ your power, &c.

HYMN.

HAIL, Virgin ever blooming, and MOTHER EVER VIRGIN, Queen of Mercy, crowned with stars more brilliant than all the angels! You are in heaven, at the right hand of the King of Glory, and the splendour which surrounds you dazzles all the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Mother of Divine grace! Sweet Hope of sinners! Assured Port of all those who have suffered shipwreck! Gate of Heaven, ever open! You in whom the sick find a cure (for their diseases!) Vouchsafe to assist us by your powerful intercession, so that we may enjoy the vision of the King of Glory in the happy abode of the celestials. Amen.

V. Your holy name, O sacred Virgin! is more sweet and delightful than embalmed oil.

R. You are beloved with an extreme tenderness by all your faithful servants.

V. Holy Virgin, support, &c.
R. And let my supplication, &c.

PRAYER.

HOLY MARY, Queen of the Heavens, &c. (*as before, page* 20.)

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THE RECOMMENDATION.

We beseech thee, O holy Virgin! so full of tenderness for us, to vouchsafe that we present these canticles of praise to your honour. We humbly beseech thee to become our conductress and special Protectrix during the course of our lives, and, above all, assist us in a more particular manner *during our agony*, and at the critical moment of death, O Mary, who are so full of sweetness and of compassion and of affection for us! Amen.

PAUL V. GRANTS ONE HUNDRED DAYS' INDULGENCE TO ALL FOR RECITING THE FOLLOWING ANTHEM AND PRAYER.

This is the incomparable Virgin, in whom is found neither the contagion of *original* nor the deformity of any *actual* sin.

V. You have been immaculate in your conception, O Holy Virgin!

R. Pray unto God the Father for us, whose Son you did bring forth.

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LET US PRAY.

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary didst prepare a fit habitation for thy Son, we beseech thee, that as by the precious death of her same Son thou didst preserve her pure from all spot, so likewise grant that we, by her intercession made free from sin, may attain unto thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end. Amen.

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THE PLAINT OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN,

COMMONLY CALLED

"THE STABAT MATER."

[Written by St. Gregory the Great, Pope and C., upwards of 1240 years since. Pope Innocent XI. grants an Indulgence of 100 days for reciting it.]

THE BLESSED VIRGIN, the most afflicted of mothers, stood at the foot of the Cross, bathed in tears, in beholding her dear Son fastened to it.

Her soul, penetrated with the most poignant grief, plunged into an ocean of bitterness, gave evidence of its affliction in sighs and lamentations; and all the outrages which her beloved Son suffered were so many stabs of a poignard which transpierced her heart.

Who can ever comprehend what was the affliction of this sacred mother in beholding the pitiable state to which her dear Son was reduced?

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In what extreme desolation was the most tender of mothers, as a witness of all the torments—of all the ignominies, that were poured out upon her adorable Son!

What man so hard-hearted, who, beholding the mother of JESUS CHRIST in this frightful, overwhelming sorrow and sadness, could refrain from tears!

Who could have looked on the most tender of mothers, feeling in her SOUL all that her beloved Son suffered in his BODY, without being touched —without being moved, at the thoughts of it!

She saw that Jesus, her dear Son, was mocked, scourged, glutted with torments and ignominies, *for the sins of his people.*

In fine, she saw this beloved Son expire on the Cross, in the most forlorn condition—in the most unexampled desolation!

Ah! afflicted mother of the most "beautiful love," enable me to participate in your grief, that I may mingle my tears with yours.

Inflame my heart with the fire of Divine love, in order that I may ardently love Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my God, for without this love I could not please him.

Holy mother, let the wounds of Jesus Christ, fastened to the Cross, be ever deeply engraven in my heart. It is not just that you alone should

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feel them; it is for *me* that your beloved Son has suffered them; vouchsafe at least that I participate in them with *you*.

That my tears may ever be joined with yours, and that during my life the sight of the crucifix may penetrate my soul with the most lively grief and holy compassion!

What can I desire more advantageous for me, than to accompany you at the foot of the Cross, and to mingle, as it were, my tears with yours!

Holy Virgin, the glory of all virgins, vouchsafe this condescension, and suffer me to weep the death of my Saviour with you!

Let me ever have before my eyes my dying Saviour, in order that I may taste the fruit of his passion, and that I may have during my life a tender devotion to his sacred wounds.

Let the ardent love of your Son pierce my heart on beholding these sacred wounds, and may I henceforward find sweetness only in the CROSS!

Inflamed with this holy love, may I, O sacred Virgin! find in you at the day of judgment a powerful Protectress, an Advocate, a Mother!

Let me find in the Cross of Jesus Christ a rampart against all the efforts of my enemies—in his death, arms to conquer them—and in the help of his grace, my strength and my salvation.

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My dear mother, by your powerful intercession, may my soul after my death enjoy the felicity of the saints in the happy abode of eternal glory. Amen.*

* The original of the foregoing is in Latin. It is beautifully written. The learned can judge how far successful the French translator has been. For my part, I have given his version as if he wrote in English.

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THE LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN,

[For reciting which there are 300 days' Indulgence.]

LORD, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary,
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of virgins,
Mother of Christ,
Mother of divine grace,
Mother most pure,
Mother most chaste,
Mother undefiled,
Mother inviolate,
Mother most amiable,
} Pray for us.

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Mother most admirable,
Mother of our Creator,
Mother of our Redeemer,
Virgin most pure,
Virgin most prudent,
Virgin most sweet,
Virgin most venerable,
Virgin most renowned,
Virgin most powerful,
Virgin most merciful,
Virgin most faithful,
Mirror of Justice,
Seat of Wisdom,
Cause of our joy,
Spiritual Vessel,
Vessel of Honour,
Vessel of Singular Devotion,
Mystical Rose,
Tower of David,
Tower of Ivory,
House of Gold,
Ark of the Covenant,
Gate of Heaven,
Morning Star,
Health of the Weak,
Refuge of Sinners,
Comforter of the Afflicted,
Help of Christians,

} Pray for us.

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Queen of Angels,
Queen of Patriarchs,
Queen of Prophets,
Queen of Apostles,
Queen of Martyrs,
Queen of Confessors,
Queen of Virgins,
Queen of all Saints, } Pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world; spare us, O Lord!

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world; hear us, O Lord!

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY.

GRANT us, thy servants, O Lord God! we beseech thee, that we may enjoy a continual health of body and soul, and that by the intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, we may be delivered from present afflictions, and enjoy eternal happiness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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HYMN OF THE CHURCH, "O GLORIOSA VIRGINUM!"*

O, MARY! whilst thy Maker blest
Is nourished at thy virgin breast,
Such glory shines, that stars less bright
Behold thy face and lose their light.
The loss that man in Eve deplores
Thy fruitful womb in Christ restores,
And makes the way to heaven free
For those that mourn to follow thee.
By thee the heavenly gates display
And shew the light of endless day.
Sing, ransomed nations! sing, and own
Your ransom was a Virgin's Son!
May age to age for ever sing
The Virgin's Son and Angels' King,
And praise with the celestial host
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen.

V. Blessed art thou among women, O Mary!
R. And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

* This hymn is found in French poetry in the original. I give a poetic translation which I find in an old English writer.

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PRAYER.

O God, who wouldst have thy Word take flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the declaration of the angel, grant us, thy suppliants, that we who believe her to be truly the mother of God may find favour with thee by her intercession, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER TO OBTAIN A HAPPY DEATH.

O, Holy Virgin, Saint Joseph, Saint Anne, and Saint Joachim, my dear patrons, men and women. I beseech you, by that fervour and fire of love which have attracted your hearts to God, to assist me now and at the hour of my death! Amen.

A PRAYER TO DEDICATE ONESELF TO THE SERVICE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, and Most Sacred Virgin, I (*here mention your name,*) take you and choose you this day for my mother, my patron, my mistress, and my advocate: proposing and protesting *never to leave your service and*

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your love, or to do or permit anything contrary to your honour, beseeching you also, from the bottom of my heart, that you may deign to receive me as your servant, and to assist me in all my actions, and at the hour of my death. Amen.

A PRAYER TO BE RECITED ON THE FEASTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

O, Holy Mary, Mother of my God, although I may be unworthy to be received among the number of your servants, ever sustained (as I am) by the greatness of your mercy, and impelled by the great desire that I have to serve you, in the presence of my Angel Guardian and the whole heavenly court, I take and choose you for my Mother, my Lady, and my Mistress, protesting that henceforward I shall serve and love you all the days of my life, and that I shall never permit anything in my power contrary to your honour. Therefore, I beseech you, by the merits of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, to deign to take me under your protection, and to guard me, obtaining for me the grace to conduct myself in such a manner in all my actions, that I may never offend Him. And I beseech you also particularly to assist me at the hour of my death, that by your intercession I may escape eternal fire. Amen.

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PREFACE TO THE NOTES.

I HAVE appended the following little Notes for the information of the pious reader. The language of the office is figurative, and though the matter for each canonical hour be very short, yet when fully understood it will be copiously expressive, because embracing some of the most beautiful passages of sacred history.

The reader will find the hymns in *prose;* this sounds strange to what we call "an English ear," but they are prose in the original also. The "*Stabat Mater*," as most readers know, was originally Latin harmonic verse. It was written by Pope Gregory the Great fourteen hundred years ago; now, from this I conclude, by analogy, that the office is not only a very ancient composition, but that it was also written originally in Latin harmonics. Indeed, some of our finest English prose translations were once verse or rhyme, in which many of the old writers composed. Fenelon of Cambray wrote one

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of the finest works on record in *prose*, and yet it is called an Epic *poem*. Poetry is creation, as the original Greek word implies; but it does not follow that such creation needs be in rhyme, which charms the musical ear, while it frequently "fetters the sense" or meaning of the writer, and often rather puzzles than informs the reader. Prose, though often musical, may not affect the *ear*, yet it may reach the *heart* and *affections*. I hope the latter may be said for this office, when clearly understood by the assistance of these Notes. They are very simple, but not as full as I could desire; in some instances they will refresh the memory of the scholar; at least they will on a small scale tend to give information to those for whom they are principally intended—(namely, the poor, who have no time to devote to books;) if so, I shall, on the whole, be amply rewarded for my very agreeable little effort.

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NOTES.

AT MATINS AND LAUDS.

"*Brilliant Star of the Morning.*"

THE Aurora or morning star is magnificent in the midst of the smaller stars. So the Blessed Virgin among women.

"*Light without mist or cloud.*"

THIS is a fine figure of her immaculate purity, born as she was without the slightest inheritance of the sin of Adam. This we cannot question. We believe it; we cannot understand it. Our knowledge is very limited in any way. Faith makes all things easy—

"Si le sens s'y trouve imbecile,
La foi nous le rendra facile."

"*God has elected and predestined her, &c.*"

FROM all eternity God destined our gracious Lady to be the mother of his Son. Millions of ages before she was born, he loved her—for, millions of ages to come are as clear before the eyes of God as it is clear

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to us that day is followed by night; and he sees, and has seen from eternity, the birth of the poorest creature as clearly as he sees me while I write and you while you read. The past, present, and future are all present to His adorable mind.

AT PRIME.

SOME of the passages in this hour are very difficult.

"*The bread of angels and the wheat of the elect*"

Is clearly the Holy Sacrament of the altar. Our Lord, not content with offering his life for the redemption of man, still offers himself *daily on our altars*—remains in our tabernacles, present to our senses, under the appearance of this wheat (or bread) of the elect. "He that eats this bread shall live for ever." Blessed be Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament of the altar." The "*seven mysterious pillars*" are, I think, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

"*You are the mother of the living.*"

THIS is a striking passage. By *the living* may be understood those that are not in mortal sin. Those in that unhappy state are *dead;* they are enemies of God, and therefore cannot be the children of God, and therefore, again, cannot be the children of Mary. But it does not follow that the Blessed Virgin is *careless about them.* No; she, best after God, knows the infinite price paid for each of us. She never refuses to help the greatest sinner—to deliver him from the power of the devil, whose head she crushes. She is the "Refuge of Sinners." The moment the

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sinner invokes her, she hears and enables him to repent of his sin, go to confession (if a priest be to be had,) and receive absolution, without which there is no certainty of forgiveness. Christ seeks the "lost sheep;" such, then, must be dear to his sacred mother.

"*Sovereign Queen of angels, &c.*"

A QUEEN is a Sovereign, so that this passage seems tautological, or a repetition of the word queen; but our Lady is not only a queen, but the Queen of queens—"Queen of all Saints;" therefore, to call her simply a queen would be quite below her wonderful, her miraculous dignity. "The daughters of Sion beheld her, and declared her most blessed, and queens have praised her."

"*Formidable to the whole power of hell.*"

THE power of hell is dreadful. Now, to conceive the nature of this power, we have only to reflect on the power of the Blessed Virgin against it, which is above human comprehension. If we cannot know fully the nature or position of any being, we cannot know fully the nature of any of its attributes or qualities. But we cannot know fully the nature or position of the Blessed Virgin; therefore, we cannot know the nature or extent of her power, or the solicitude with which she watches over us, to guard us from the wiles, insinuations, snares, and temptations of the devil, who would die of hatred of us, if the Almighty did not make him immortal, to live for ever in eternal misery. The best idea that can be given

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of her power is expressed in the words, "*more invincible than an army in battle array.*" An army opposed to her would vanish like a mist before the burning sun of India. In this canonical hour we invoke the aid of Her dreadful power against our enemies during the day. The name of Mary is most dreadful to devils.

AT THIRD.

"*Hail, true Ark of the Covenant!*"

THIS is a splendid figure—perhaps the most splendid of all the figures in this office. The Almighty delivered his oracles to the Jewish people from the Ark of the Covenant. The history connected with this is so beautiful, that without copying the whole it would lose the effect on the mind of the reader. In this Ark, which was mostly formed of pure gold, was the propitiatory or *Mercy seat.* How beautifully figurative of "the Queen of Mercy."

"*August throne, &c.*"

THE allusion to Solomon here is a fine figure of our Lady. His glory and splendour and wisdom exceeded those of any other monarch or human being. The Queen of Sheba came to see "Solomon in all his glory." Yet before one ray of the glory of the Blessed Virgin all this splendour and glory, and all the united splendour of every monarch on earth, would sink into utter insignificance. Solomon was a member of the royal family from which the Blessed Virgin was descended.

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"*Brilliant arch in the firmament.*"

THE rainbow, or sign, by which we know God will not destroy the world by water, as he did at the Flood. But the figure is splendid, taken in a natural point of view. The colours of the rainbow, or sun, drawn upon what is called the prismatic glass, are exceedingly beautiful. The brilliancy of the colours is figurative of the brilliant and incomparable glories of our Lady.

"*Burning bush.*"

GOD spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and performed two great miracles,—1st. in changing the rod which Moses held in his hand into a serpent, and the serpent again into a rod; and, secondly, in striking his hand with a leprosy, which was cured when Moses by command put the hand into his bosom. Though these figures appear to have no reference to the Blessed Virgin, they remind the reader of her authority over the serpent, the devil, who in her hands is inanimate or powerless. The leprosy may be figurative of the leprosy of sin, from which she has ransomed millions by her great power and intercession with God.

"*Mysterious rod of Aaron, &c.*"

AARON was a high priest of the Jews; he was called by Miracle to that holy office. He placed his rod in the temple, which bloomed on the following morning, as if taken off a tree in the wood or forest. This was the sign of his election by God to the sacred office.

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This may appear to have no reference to the Blessed Virgin; it is far otherwise. She was not only of royal origin, but many of her illustrious race were of the priestly order. She gave birth to *Jesus Christ*, who was the great High Priest and Victim—"a Priest eternally, according to the order of Melchisedech." This adorable Priest is the Head of the whole sacerdotal race. From him have proceeded spiritually all the popes, prelates, and clergy of the Church in every age; from Him they will proceed to the end of time, to rule the Church of God. The Blessed Virgin, then, is the Mother and Queen of the Priesthood, for she is the great fountain, under God, from whom they all derive their origin. Dreadful dignity of Priests, who at the awful moment of Consecration, at Mass, *represent the person of Jesus Christ!* How awful then to strike or injure a priest!

"*Fleece of Gideon.*"

GIDEON was a very humble man, who by the power of God gained a great victory over his powerful enemies. This figure feebly represents the Blessed Virgin.

AT SIXTH.

"*Hail, Virgin and Mother, &c.*"

WHAT a title this is! No other created being can be called a virgin and a mother. Any other, if a mother, cannot be a virgin; if a virgin, she cannot be a mother at the same moment. Mary is miraculously both. Blessed be her virginity! Blessed be her maternity!

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"*Royalty and the sacerdotal race*"

ARE united in the person of the Blessed Vir
The reader already knows that she was of r
blood; she was of the priestly race also; but
gave birth to the Great High Priest, who wa
crown to all her honours.

"*The Mysterious Oriental Gate.*"

THIS is a beautiful figure; perhaps a finer po
idea never entered the mind of man. Oriental
nifies Eastern. To the people of Europe and A
rica the Holy Land, where our Lady was born,
East: so she is called the Eastern or Oriental Gat

"*Abundance of grace, &c.*"

A VESSEL full of any liquid (for example) can cont
no more; the greatest saint could perhaps have
more graces. The Blessed Virgin could not, for
angel of the Lord declared her "*full of grace.*"

"*As the lily among the thorns, &c.*"

MANY animals have a horror even of inanimate
jects. Certain birds fly at the appearance of re
the crocodile (as its name in Greek imports,) drea
a (yellow) flower growing in the Nile, and the he
less traveller escapes its fury if he carries the flow
The lily here is the Blessed Virgin—fair as the li
without spot or stain; the thorns are the serpen
which have a great horror of the lily; the serpe
are the devils, who fly in confusion at the very sou
of the sweet name, "MARY!" In all temptatio
we invoke Jesus and Mary.

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AT NINTH.

"*Mysterious Tower of David, &c.*"

the Tower of King David were found all sorts of
ıs, ensigns of his power, and trophies, as well as
lefence against his enemies. These are figurative
the Blessed Virgin's victories in preserving the
t and converting sinners, and thus rescuing them
n the grasp of their enemy, the devil, whom from
first moment of her conception she has "*crushed,*"
l will crush for ever.

"*The Invincible Judith.*"

E history of this lady is very long. She was a
y widow who lived in retirement. On the approach
a powerful general to attack her native city, the
abitants were thrown into despair. She called
priests together; first rebuked them for their
nt of confidence in God, asked their prayers, and
er invoking the protection of heaven, she went out
meet the enemy, 142,000 strong. To be brief,
had the head of the general cut off, and thus de-
ered her country. The figure here is strong; the
d of the army reminds one of the head of the ser-
t, whose army is very powerful—not too much
the power of our Lady.

"*The wise Abigail.*"

IS lady was a very wise and very humble person.
r husband was a foolish man; he gave great offence
King David. Abigail, by her wisdom, appeased
wrath of the king. Her husband soon after died

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and David, notwithstanding her protestations of unworthiness, made her his queen. This figure, in my humble judgment, is not very strong.

"*Rachel has had the honour, &c.*"

JOSEPH, by his wisdom and foresight saved Egypt from a famine. I do not see any great strength in this figure. The reader may.

AT VESPERS.

THE word Vespers signifies evening, when this part of the office is generally read. The holy author of the office beautifully introduces the sun-dial. The going down of the sun too is a figure in allusion to the debasement of our Lord beneath the dignity of angels in his Incarnation. He is the "SUN OF JUSTICE." "From the rising to the going down of the sun, his name is worthy of praise." He daily humbles himself below the dignity of angels, in descending on our altars into the hands of the most unworthy priest. Blessed be his adorable name!

"*Dial of Achaz.*"

IT is not easy to understand this figure. The history of this dial I find briefly as follows:— King Ezechias was at the point of death. The holy prophet Isaiah admonished him "to set his house in order," and prepare. The king wept, and with a lively faith and confidence in God, prayed for a longer life. God heard his prayer, and the prophet announced to him that in three days he should be able to make his appearance

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in the Temple. In confirmation of this promise, the prophet wrought a miracle on the dial of Achaz, in making the shadow of the index go ten degrees backward from the point to which it was advanced.

The figure may allude to the raising us up from spiritual, as God did the king from natural death. The prior of Sombreval says, in allusion to this occurrence in the king's life, "that it is better for the good to die when in sickness," *when the will of God;* for the king, during these fifteen years, incurred the displeasure of the adorable Being who prolonged his life.

"*Beautiful as the moon, &c.*"

THE moon borrows all its light from the sun, as Mary does all her splendour from God. This is a beautiful figure. She enlightens us during our pilgrimage on the dark, dreary ocean of this world's adversities, and guides us like a skilful pilot to the port of eternal day. The name, Mary, signifies STAR OF THE SEA.

AT COMPLIN.

THIS word, Complin, is taken from a Latin verb *compleo*, to fill up, because complin closes, when read, as well the office as the day. There is no figure in this hour, for it winds up the office by invoking the protection of our great Mother and Advocate, through whom be all honour, and praise, and glory to God, "first, last, midst, and without end!" Amen.

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